

ACADEMIC FREEDOM.*

A STRANGER is invited to address this Convocation with the idea, I suppose, that the mere fact of his being concerned with a different set of problems may make what he has to say of interest to the students of the Capital of the Middle West. And the outsider, dutifully accepting the invitation and pulling up his stakes, finds himself shot into the most interesting and most critical economic situation in the history of Canada, a testing time of old views and of new views; of policies but particularly of men. What academic subject is there which can compare in interest with what is going on today in Winnipeg? What University lecture was ever half as engrossing as the talk of the men gathered about the doors of the Labor Temple or the throng of yesterday in Victoria Park. It is a hard struggle this—all the harder because of the quietness with which it is being fought. Oliver Wendell Holmes said of a kiss that it did not make as much noise as a cannon shot, but the echo of it lasted a great deal longer. And the echo of this movement of today will be rumbling around the sky-scrapers and the city that is to be when the members of the graduating class are as old as I am.

The temptation, of course, is great to deliver oneself upon conditions as one sees them, but I have wisdom enough to refrain. We have most of us suffered from the superficialities of the globe-trotter, from the dogmatism of the amateur statesman who has made a flying tour in India and is ready on the strength of it to point out the path of progress and of duty to men who have given themselves, as their fathers did

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before them, to the splendid Civil Service of that great dependency. We remember the history of troops that came into the war at a late stage, when the sacrifices had been borne for weary months and years, and were inclined to correct the shortcomings of the veterans in strategy and in personal bearing. Rupert Brooke was to us as a man inspired until someone was unwise enough to publish the callow letters of a youth visiting this continent, bearing with him all the prejudices of an older civilization and not able to understand what he saw. I shall stick to my academic subject even though this may be a day full of fate for the city in which we are met.

Some months ago a professor of Economics in a State University south of the border was encouraged by his University to undertake an investigation into the taxation of mines. The study was carried through and its general conclusion was that the copper mines of that State were not contributing anything like their proper share. The Chancellor of the University, (not the President,), forbade the publication of the research. The professor took the ground that the research had been instigated by the University and that he had a perfect right to set forth the results of his work. He accordingly published the report apart altogether from the University in which he was engaged. He was thereupon dismissed by the Chancellor for insubordination. A most vigorous protest came from all over the United States and within the last few days the Professor has been reinstated. But a blow has been given to that University from which it will take at least a generation to recover. Men of any independence of mind will shun it like the pest. Its standing has been shaken both with teachers and with prospective students. The world of learning has passed through those long centuries when ecclesiasticism was the great barrier to progress. Is it now to pass through another stage dominated by interests which have not even the excuse that they consider themselves related to the kingdom of things invisible?

Obviously the incident raises a host of questions with regard to academic freedom and the relations of the University to the State. All kinds of new economic questions are being thrust to the front. The struggle that used to centre

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round natural science and its relation to theological presuppositions is now being transferred to matters economic and social. The University system in Canada is being largely modelled upon that of the States. All the newer Universities in the Dominion are Provincial Universities. It is highly improbable that any Canadian University will now be founded upon any private endowment. Dalhousie, McGill, and Queen's are the three main Canadian Universities that have begun and continued as private corporations. And even with regard to these it is probable that the conditions may rapidly change. A modern University is so expensive an affair that a constant increase of endowment is necessary or else a very liberal support on the part of the Province or the State. Queen's, last year, received from the Government of Ontario \$125,000, of the expenditure of which no details were asked. Halcyon days such as these cannot indefinitely continue. As Principal of Queen's I greatly value the freedom I have in the expenditure of that money and I trust that the days of regulation may be far off. But as a citizen of Ontario I am quite sure that the Government ought to control its own expenditure. I shall, of course, fight against any curtailment of liberty, while quite sure that some curtailment is under the circumstances only just!

But if the State support a University, is the State entitled to control the type of teaching within the University? Will the administration of a University be likely to depend for its academic existence upon the whims of the Legislature? Will men of independence accept positions when the tenure may be insecure? For the State itself may come to be controlled by the big financial interests. Montana may be dominated by the Mining Companies. A Province in Canada may find itself controlled politically by an industry vitally concerned in a certain economic view, whether high tariff or free trade. Then if a contrary policy is being taught in the University, or if the teaching is strictly without bias and consequently without enthusiasm one way or the other, can these large interests hint to the State that the removal of a certain professor might be advisable, that his maintenance is closing the money bags, whereas his transference, voluntary or otherwise, might intro-

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duce a large train of pious donors who would minister to the constant hunger of the institution? In the old English Universities the pious donors left money so that masses might be said for their souls. The gift became operative after death. But today the pious donors are very much alive and the gift has often a string to it. A situation has been created which is full of difficulty. Institutions which need the money most are tempted to accept it on any terms, and, having been to begin with poor in body, they now become bankrupt in spirit. The institutions like Harvard, which are already wealthy, refuse all the advances of the donor who would make a conditional gift. Personally, I prefer the pious donors dead!

It is an indubitable sign of middle age when you become a praiser of times past, but I cannot help looking back upon the Scottish University life with amazement at its lack of system and wonder at its practical results. There was behind it, it must be allowed, a traditional love of and reverence for learning; a good system of elementary schools; and—whether you believe it or not—a certain unworld'ness of type. The appointments to Chairs were made mainly by the Crown, which meant the Secretary of State for Scotland for the time being. An honest effort was made to get the best man. Within the Universities there was a lack of organization that would make a theorist gasp. The appointments were for life. The classes were enormous, 200 or 300 as a rule. There were few assistants, and what assistants there were were private adventures of the professors. The curriculum was restricted to certain broad subjects. In my time the Arts subjects were Latin and Greek: Mathematics and Physics: Mental and Moral Philosophy: and English Literature. The student had to take all these subjects; there was no such thing as an option. Nor was there any attempt whatever at co-ordination. Every man taught his subject exactly as he pleased, and if he did not teach it well there was nothing to be done except wait a generation for his decease. The result was a variety of viewpoint that was of the very essence of a genuine University life. Mental Philosophy was taught by John Veitch, one of the school of Sir William Hamilton and an authority upon Border Literature. Out of the recesses of memory there comes a

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Limerick appearing in the "University Magazine" which put the situation pretty well —

There was a professor of Reason
Who convicted Hegelians of treason;
He swore by his Reid,
Forgetting indeed
That Reid was long since out of season.

One passed from the bedlam of Veitch's classroom to the uncanny silence of Edward Caird's teaching in Moral Philosophy. Caird was an out and out Hegelian—a tall, shy, man, who took away from you in the first months everything on which you had rested and then began to make you think out a position of your own. There were hardly any class exercises or essays—how could there be with so enormous a class—but the interest aroused was better than any essays, and men out of their poverty bought Jowett and Zeller. Ramsay, a Highland laird, who despised us all as being without his social purview, taught Latin, and Sir Richard Jebb, Greek. Jebb was followed by Gilbert Murray, a socialist, who united extremes by marrying an Earl's daughter. Lord Kelvin was professor of Physics. To say that he taught the subject would be a misstatement. He could not teach at all. He assumed that everyone knew as much mathematics as he did. His experiments invariably failed, and then the lightning fell upon the head of "Malcolm", his factotum, who was, during the summer months, a deckhand in his yacht. His laboratory, in a dark basement, would have been scoffed at by any teacher in a secondary school. But there you saw, in string and sealing wax and wood, the first draft of many a discovery that has been epoch making. So far as Physics goes, few of us ever learned anything from Lord Kelvin, but the contact with this first class intellect, with its freshness and daring and resource and infinite suggestiveness, with its readiness to go flying off in pursuit of any side issues—it was the experience of a life time. And men today who would be sorry indeed to be questioned as to the formulae for falling bodies will never forget the impression received in that classroom of the narrow limits of the known and the spaciousness of truth. In another faculty, Chemistry was taught by an aged professor whose only excellence was that he was a

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good dancer, but somehow or other he had secured as his assistant a man of the true research type, who was also the best of good fellows. Willie Ramsay became afterwards Sir William Ramsay, discoverer of the latent elements in the atmosphere—argon and neon. If you read the posthumous volume of his essays, you will see what an immense range of general knowledge Ramsay had acquired during his haphazard Arts course, and you will notice his command of the high art of describing in simple words the thing in itself difficult. To begin to recall these old days is to let loose a flood of memories. Somehow or other the nature of the case encouraged "characters." Much of the teaching, as one looks back upon it, was poor. Nothing whatever was done to help the student. If he did not understand, he ought to have understood. If he did not work that was his lookout. There was no attempt at personal touch between professor and student. We were simply the source of fees which separately were very small, but taken together made salaries large beyond anything known here. And yet, somehow or other, the business of education was done, and, on the whole, well done. We were not instructed, but we had the stimulus of seeing some good men at work, and we knew that it was the chance of a life time. Those who would like to see the life described by the hand of a master should read Barrie's "An Edinburgh Eleven."

I know well how impossible it is to transfer to another land a system which has grown up and justified itself under very different conditions. In the constitution of Queen's University it is stated that it is to be carried on upon the lines of Edinburgh University. It has already diverged far from that track and is likely to diverge yet further. But the broad lesson of the Universities of the Old Country is that without a very elaborate organization you may get the genuine University spirit. No organization will create keenness; but when you get keenness the organization becomes secondary. Every constituency, however, has to deal with the material that it possesses and its methods will vary according to the education and outlook of the student. And we have moved far in the last quarter of a century in the teaching of any scientific subject. Every student now knows the things that but a short time ago

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were the marvels of fresh discovery. Consequently there is the ever clamant cry for new opportunities not merely to demonstrate the known but also to search into the problems that lie to hand. The teaching of science is now becoming a vastly expensive business, and the Faculties of Medicine and Applied Science are apt to get a good deal of what they wish, while Arts may be starved. It is universally recognized, too, that education is the business of the State. Education concerns the whole community just as public health does. It is a loss to the state when opportunities are not given to all to realize the most of themselves. But if it is the business of the State to provide primary and even secondary education, it is difficult to say why the State should not shoulder the whole burden of education and make the Universities free. The Fisher Bill is heading that way, and there are movements within Canada which show that the same tendencies are strongly at work. Except for the old and strongly endowed Universities the future is with the great State and Provincial organizations. How can these develop under the wing of the State and yet maintain their academic freedom? The constant danger is that the administration becomes so cautious and conservative and temporizing in its nature that it loses sympathy with freshness and originality of view. Instead of being the sponsor of fresh knowledge it takes itself so seriously as a branch of the Civil Service that it has no kindly welcome for the inconvenient and original thinker. One cannot but be sensible of the fact that in many of the Universities of the States there is a broad and apparently broadening chasm between the administrative and the educational branches. The President may be a human being, but, as President, he is anathema. He is credited with being an autocrat. He is accused of being the predisposing cause of Bolshevism on the staff. On their side, professors feel that the policy of the institution may be dictated by many considerations which have to do only with finance and not with scholastic ideals. They assert that their positions are insecure and their honesty of thought warped by the fact that they have to accommodate themselves to a rule the first purpose of which is the avoidance of offence to "interests". They declare too, that the spectacular features

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of University life are encouraged rather than the men who make the University and add to the sum of human learning. They, themselves, are hampered in money matters while vast sums are being put into stone and lime. The war has come to upset the normal standards of value. The mechanic in a shipyard draws more money than the professor who has spent twenty years in the acquisition of his special knowledge. In half a hundred ways this alienation is observable and behind it all there is the sense that administration tends to become political and to be infected with the carefulness of politics.

If there be any justification for this view it cannot but do harm to University life. For while the politician has to have his ear to the ground and to have an intuition for the cross currents in public life, it is the business of the University teacher to stimulate thought and set forth, as a pioneer, the new point of view. In the days of my boyhood, I remember very well the docks in Glasgow crowded with great sailing ships, moored in tiers, with their figureheads breasting the bollards of the wharf and their long jib-booms thrusting out far over the freight sheds. The scents of the cargo are with me still, as coffee, and spices, and rare woods from the East Indies, were discharged. For these great vessels with their towering spars, preparing to go forth on a fresh voyage, were, each of them, a fresh kindling of fancy as one thought of the many backwaters of the world's commerce in which they might be about to seek a fresh cargo. I should like to think of the staff of the University with some such awakening of the imagination. The men are in their present posts because they have done something, because out of many an intellectual continent, only dimly understood by me, they have brought their cargo. And I should like to think of them as never satisfied with what they have already done but as having in mind yet further and more arduous and more hazardous voyages. If the right temper is in a University the sympathy of the administration will be with the thinker and the intellectual adventurer. Far better the crank with brains than the unexceptionable nobody. But the administration that has to guide the machine finds it hard to tolerate eccentricity.

On the other hand there are some obvious limits to aca-

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ademic freedom and when one tries to formulate them, they resolve themselves into the exercise of commonsense. Commonsense, however, is not an invariable characteristic of learned men. For learning means concentration, and concentration implies isolation, and in isolation things may be seen all out of proportion. And so your learned man may often be, in the things of this life, a child; great because of his self-imposed limitations, small because he has never been in any real touch with the give and take of life, its mixture of rapture and disappointment, of idealism and the acceptance of the flat-footed reasonableness of things as they are. A man has to remember that there is a certain corporate life in the institution of which he is a part, and if he fails to observe the fact he may create a situation that will destroy mutual confidence and make good work impossible. But if a member of the staff cannot see this no administration will be able to teach it to him. The very fineness of discrimination that may make a man great as critic and teacher may make him almost impossible as a colleague.

A professor must also hold it in view that he is a member of the University for the purpose of doing one special thing. He is perfectly entitled to his opinion on every kind of subject. But he is doing an unfair thing if he use his position as teacher of one subject to air all his fancies upon another. There is a world of difference between Darwin and Haeckel. Darwin's work on pigeons and on earthworms was revolutionary in its effect upon the general conception of the universe. The theological implications of it are not all worked out yet. But Darwin left that side of things alone. What he was concerned with was the observation of facts and the asking of the question whether they would fit into a hypothesis. His work is still seminal. But Haeckel abandoned his science, where he was supreme, to follow up another line of things where he was not even a master. A professor has to play fair by his institution and by his colleagues. And he has also to play fair by his students. He has to remember that in their view he is a very learned person indeed, and that in much of his teaching he is scattering his ideas on unpreempted soil. He has to take into account the maturity or the immaturity of those with whom

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he is dealing. Members of a University staff may consider that it is for their comfort or otherwise, but there certainly is in University life itself the strongest prophylactic to any particular "tendency" in teaching. There is the discussion and argument of students among themselves. There are those nights which stand out in memory long after most of the distinctly academic effort has faded from view, nights when the clock stood still and the air was thick with noisome fumes, when no academic reputation was safe and the essentially true but unprintable things were said. A University would still be the most valuable process in education even though there were no teaching staff at all—nothing but a few janitors, a library, a dining-hall, a residence, and some corporate life. We, who are in some measure responsible for things as they are, would do well to remember the fact and not to take ourselves too seriously.

It is vital for a University to bear in mind that its main business is not to give instruction but to awaken and to inspire. There is a grave danger in all this modern complicated organization, in this infinite number of options, in these large staffs, in the sense, springing no doubt from a due reverence for a subject, that the last degree of specialization is necessary—there is danger that the prime function of a University be forgotten. A University is not a superior kind of technical school; it is not in the first place a device for preparing a man to gain a living. It is a challenge to the mind. It is a ferment. It is a place where men see visions and dream dreams: a place with its spells of glorious and informing idleness: a place where a man discovers how little is known and learns consequently to allot a part and destiny to the intellectual chalatan and to love and cherish the humility of the genuine scholar. The fool contents himself with a text book and a synopsis, while the wise man allows himself for a season to become the slave of the big book. The main purpose of a University must ever be suggestive rather than didactic. The administration must see to it that there is academic freedom. I would rather have eccentricities than flatness. I would rather spend a long day in getting a clever and injudicious man out of a hole than I would waste it in striving to make

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a dull dog wake up. Liberty may have its dangers but it has as well its exceeding great rewards. There are signs not a few that within a democracy there may be a real intellectual tyranny and under the State supervision of education an encouragement of the thing that is only safe and tractable. In the matters of the mind officialism is the enemy, whether it be in the form of a University administration that is only politic or of a general educational system which has lost the human touch its founder intended it to have.

You are today taking your farewell of an institution in which you have passed what you will increasingly acknowledge to have been the best years of your life. Whatever happiness and usefulness await you, you cannot carry with you always the glow of the morning. You are now going forth to shoulder your burdens. You pass in a day from being the irresponsible critics to being the responsible criticized. You are near enough your examinations to know that a diploma may sometimes represent a good deal less than your parents and other indulgent critics think that it does. All ignorance is pardonable so long as it does not call itself knowledge. But now the struggle really begins and instead of the relatively sheltered life of the University you have to face the realities, the long patience, the many bitter things, the rivalries of old friends, the disappointments, the blunting of the edge of your idealisms. You will find men whom in the University you beat hands down, your masters in the business of life. Remember then that academic distinction is not the only proof of genuine ability. Those who have served at the Front have told you how frequently the man who made no special mark in the training camp showed, when there were stern matters in hand, that the supreme qualities were there. And so it is in life. In this land of opportunity, good ability will take a man almost anywhere he wishes to go. But while ability will take you to the top, it is only character that will keep you there, those personal qualities that the strain and the emergency will discover. I wish you God speed.

R. BRUCE TAYLOR.